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THE NEW FEDERAL SEED ACT

Conversation between Wallace L. Kadderly, USDA Radio Service, and W. A. Davidson, In Charge of the enforcement of the Federal Seed Act, Agricultural Marketing Service, broadcast Monday, February 5, 1940, in the Department of Agriculture period, National Farm and Home Hour.

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KADDERLY:

The new Federal Seed Act becomes effective today. Several weeks ago we told you what the Act proposes to do...but on this, the day it goes into operation, we want to tell you more about it -- and how it affects both the producer and the buyer of seeds. This new Act is administered by the Agricultural Marketing Service of the Department of Agriculture. The man in charge of its enforcement is W. A. Davidson. Mr. Davidson is here to tell us about some of the provisions of this law. But before we get into those provisions let me make it clear that this new Federal Seed Act does not replace the requirements of the State laws which govern the sale of seed within the States. The State seed laws are still in effect.

Now, with that in mind, Mr. Davidson just what does this new law do?

DAVIDSON:

For one thing it requires that labels be attached to seed shipped from one State to another.

KADDERLY:

Then it applies only to seeds shipped in interstate commerce.

DAVIDSON:

That's right.

Another thing the new Federal law does is to require truthful labelling and advertising. It also restricts the shipment of seed containing noxious weed seeds.

KADDERLY:

These provisions should make it possible for the buyer of seed to know what he is buying.

DAVIDSON:

Yes...it will do that if the buyer will read the labels.

KADDERLY:

I suppose you wouldn't go so far as to say that the labels in themselves will put an end to all the troubles of the buyer of seed?

DAVIDSON:

By no means. But they should help the buyer of seed in interstate commerce to buy seed with his eyes open, so to speak; and if he does, he will get the seed that suits his needs. We like the slogan "Buyer beware - seller be fair", and we will administer the Act with the hope that the buyer and seller will each do his part.

KADDERLY:

And what kinds of seeds are covered in the Act?

DAVIDSON:

Practically all kinds of field seeds; lawn seeds and vegetable seeds.

KADDERLY:

Then field seeds, - lawn seeds - and vegetable seeds shipped from one State to another come within the provisions of Federal seed legislation.

DAVISON:

They do. Also, the Act covers field seeds, lawn seeds, and vegetable seeds when imported from foreign countries. In the past, imported seeds have been a big problem -- and a lot of poor and even worthless foreign seeds found their way onto our farms.

KADDERLY:

Now -- about the labelling requirements. You said that the law requires all seeds handled in interstate commerce must be labeled. Does it say what kind of information must appear on the labels?

DAVIDSON:

Yes, it does. The label on field seed and lawn seed must show the kind of seed in the package. It must show the percentage of pure seed and the percentage of weed seed. Also the percentage of germination and date of the germination test.

When it comes to noxious weeds, the shipper must take into account the the seed law of the State into which the seed is shipped. In some States the label must show the number of noxious weed seeds per pound.

KADDERLY:

Well, that should give the buyer all he needs to know in order to judge the quality of any lot of seed.

Now, another point you said is covered in the new Seed Act is advertisingtruthful advertising. Advertising is done in a good many ways. Does the Act cover all of these ways?

DAVIDSON:

It does. The Act provides that it shall be unlawful for any person to send out or cause to be sent out in interstate commerce any advertising on seeds that is false or misleading in any particular. This applies to all kinds of advertising including direct mail, press, radio, magazines, price cards, and catalogs. We expect this provision of the Act will have its main effect on seed catalogs.

KADDERLY:

Mr. Davidson, the catalogs for this year were prepared before the Act became effective. Many of the spring catalogs have already been distributed. So, the truthful advertising provisions of the Act cannot apply to seed catalogs already in the hands of buyers.

DAVIDSON:

That's true. But before a new catalog is issued we expect seedsmen will consider the new requirements. While we're talking about seed catalogs, I'd like to say that they have improved very much in recent years in the accuracy of the representations both in the form of pictures and written statements.

KADDERLY:

They certainly have. Now, so far you have emphasized these points: seeds must be honestly marked, and they must be honestly advertised.

DAVIDSON:

And I might add that seeds shipped by truck, as well as those shipped in other ways, come under the provisions of this Act. Those of us who are responsible for the enforcement of the new Federal Seed Act hope that seed dealers and farmers will be sure that the seeds they buy from truckers will be completely labeled. If they are not, the matter should be reported to officials in their State who have charge of enforcing the State seed laws.

KADDERLY:

As I understand it, this new Federal Seed Act requires that certain kinds of records must be kept by seed dealers. Maybe it would be a good idea to say something about that.

DAVIDSON:

By all means.

These records are highly important in making the law effective. Seed dealers must keep complete records of all seeds they ship into another State. These records must be kept in a way that will make it possible to trace any package to its point of origin.

KADDERLY:

Will this record-keeping be an expensive job for the dealer?

DAVIDSON:

I don't think so. We have held a number of meetings with seedsmen throughout the country and they are pretty well agreed that the records required by the Act will be for their own protection. In other words, it will be good business to keep the records. The facts are that seedsmen and State officials helped the Department prepare the regulations throughout.

KADDERLY:

Mr. Davidson, I believe a good many people in this audience will want to know more about this Federal Seed Act than we could cover if you and I talked here for the next half hour.

DAVIDSON:

I know what you're going to say....."do we have printed" information that could be sent to those who want it?

KADDERLY:

You're almost right. You do have the information in print. I know that. But here is what I don't know. Are there enough copies so we can offer one to those who would like to have it.

DAVIDSON:

Yes, I think so.

KADDERLY:

Good. And I'll proceed to offer it. Farm and Home friends.....if you want a copy of a leaflet that gives details about the new Federal Seed Act that became effective today we'll be glad to send you one. Address your request to the U. S. Department of Agriculture, Washington, D. C. This leaflet tells about labelling requirements, testing, tolerances, advertising, use of screenings, and keeping of records.

Let me repeat that: If you would like a copy of this leaflet on the new Seed Act, just write to the Department of Agriculture and say -- "Send me a copy of the leaflet on the new Seed Act mentioned on the National Farm and Home Hour." Be sure to give your name and address.

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